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The Story of Waitstill Baxter

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

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(Continued.)

"We shall be man and wife in New Hampshire, but not in Maine, you say," Patty reminded him dolefully. "It does seem dreadful that we can't be married in our own state and have to go darning about with this secret on our minds day and night, but it can't be helped. You'll try not to even think of me as your wife till we go to Portsmouth to live, won't you?"

"You're asking too much when you say I'm not to think of you as my wife, for I shall think of nothing else, but I've given you my solemn promise," said Mark stoutly, "and I'll keep it as sure as I live. We'll be legally married by the laws of New Hampshire, but we won't think of it as a marriage till I tell your father and mine and we drive away once more together. That time it will be in the sight of everybody, with our heads in the air. I've got the little house in Portsmouth all ready, Patty. It's small, but it's in a nice part of the town. Portsmouth is a pretty place, but it'll be a great deal prettier when it has Mrs. Mark Wilson living in it. We can be married over again in Maine afterward if your heart is set upon it. I'm willing to marry you in every state of the Union so far as I am concerned."

"I think you've been so kind and good and thoughtful, Mark, dear," said Patty, more fondly and meltingly than she had ever spoken to him before. "and so clever too. I do respect you for getting that good position in Portsmouth and being able to set up for yourself at your age. I shouldn't wonder a bit if you were a judge some day and then what a proud girl I shall be!"

day and then what a proud girl I shall be!"

Patty's praise was bestowed none too frequently, and it sounded very sweet in the young man's ears.

"I do believe I can get on with you to help me, Patty," he said, pressing her arm more closely to his side and looking down ardently into her radiant face. "You're a great deal cleverer than I am, but I have a faculty for the business of the law, so my father says, and a faculty for money making too. And even if we have to begin in a small way my salary will be a certainty, and we'll work up together. I can see you in a yellow satin dress stiff enough to stand alone!"

"It must be white satin, if you please, not yellow! After having used a hundred and ten yards of shop worn yellow calico on myself within two years I never want to wear that color again! If only I could come to you better provided," she sighed, with the suggestion of tears in her voice. "If I'd been a common servant I could have saved something from my wages to be married on. I haven't even got anything to be married in!"

"I'll get you anything you want in Portland tomorrow."

"Certainly not; I'd rather be married in rags than have you spend your money upon me beforehand!"

"Remember to have a box of your belongings packed and slipped under the shed somewhere. You can't be certain what your father will say or do when the time comes for telling him, and I want you to be ready to leave on a moment's notice."

"I will; I'll do everything you say, Mark. But are you sure that we have thought of every other way? I do so hate being underhanded. Everything depends on my keeping it secret from Waitstill, but she doesn't suspect anything yet. She thinks of me as nothing but a child still. Do you suppose Ellen would go with us just to give me a little comfort? I shouldn't miss Waitstill so much if I had Ellen, and how happy I shall be if she approves of me for a sister and thinks your mother and father will like me in time."

"There never was a creature born into the world that wouldn't love you, Patty."

"I don't know; look at Aunt Abby Cole," said Patty pensively. "Well, it does not seem as if a marriage that isn't good in Riverboro was really decent. How tiresome of Maine to want all those days of public notice; people must so often want to get married in a minute. If I think about anything too long I always get out of the notion."

"I know you do. That's what I'm afraid of." And Mark's voice showed decided nervousness. "You won't get out of the notion of marrying me, will you, Patty dear?"

"Marrying you is more than a notion," said Patty soberly. "I'm only a little past seventeen, but I'm far older because of the difficulties I've had. I don't wonder you speak of my notions. I was as light as a feather in all my dealings with you at first."

"So was I with you. I hadn't grown up, Patty."

"Then I came to know you better and see how you sympathized with Waitstill's troubles and mine. I couldn't love anybody; I couldn't marry anybody who didn't feel that things at our house can't go on as they are. Father has had a good long trial. Three wives and two daughters have done their best to live with him and failed. I am not willing to die for him, as my mother did, nor have Waitstill killed if I can help it. Sometimes he is like a man, who has lost his senses, and sometimes he is only grim and quiet and cruel. If he takes our marriage without a terrible scene, Mark, perhaps it will encourage Waitstill to break her chains as I have mine."

"There's sure to be an awful row," Mark said as one who had forecasted all the probabilities. "It wouldn't make any difference if you married the Prince of Wales; nothing would suit your father but selecting the man and making all the arrangements, and then he would never choose any one who wouldn't tend the store and work on the farm for him without wages."

"Waitstill will never run away. She isn't like me. She will sit and sit there, slaving and suffering, till doom-day, for the one that loves her isn't free like you."

"You mean Ivory Boynton? I believe he worships the ground she walks on. I like him better than I used, and I understand him better. Oh, but I'm a lucky young dog to have a kind, liberal father and a bit of money put by to do with as I choose. If I hadn't I'd be eating my heart out like Ivory."

"No, you wouldn't eat your heart out. You'd always get what you wanted somehow, and you wouldn't wait for it either, and I'm just the same. I'm not built for giving up and enduring and sacrificing. I'm naturally just a tuff of thisside-down, Mark, but, living beside Waitstill all these years, I've grown ashamed to be so light, blowing about hither and thither. Oh, if only she will forgive us, Mark, I won't mind what father says or does."

"She will forgive us, Patty, darling. Don't fret and cry and make your pretty eyes all red. I'll do nothing in all this to make either of you girls ashamed of me."

"Does the town clerk or does the justice of the peace give a wedding ring just like the minister?" Patty asked. "I shouldn't feel married without a ring."

"The ring is all ready and has 'M. W. to P. B.' engraved in it, with the place for the date waiting, and here is the engagement ring if you'll wear it when you're alone, Patty. My mother gave it to me when she thought there would be something between Annabel Franklin and me. The moment I looked at it—you see, it's a topaz stone—and noticed the yellow fire in it, I said to myself, it is like no one but Patty Baxter, and if she won't wear it no other girl shall! It's the color of the tip ends of your curls, and it's just like the light in your eyes when you're making fun."

"It's heavenly!" cried Patty. "It



"LIKE WATER TO THE THIRSTY LAND" may be poetic all right, but the man who finds himself experiencing a shower right in his dining room is not apt to appreciate that kind of poetry. Suppose you have us go over your plumbing. Then there'll be no "Little drops of water" where they are not wanted.

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WEST PIKE STREET

THAT TIRED FEELING

Suggests Grandmother's Remedy.

It's true, the season is here with its sudden changes, and the old idea that we need a blood medicine is not without reason. Too much heavy food has caused a torpid liver, sluggish blood, and a weak, tired out feeling.

Sulphur, cream of tartar and molasses was grandmother's remedy, but that has long ago been displaced by Vinol, a combination of the two most medicinal curative elements of the cod's liver, without oil, and iron for the blood.

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word you say makes me more of a man. I wish the road to New Hampshire was full of lions and I could fight my way through them just to show you how strong I feel."

"There'll be lions enough," smiled Patty through her tears, "though they won't have manes and tails. But I can imagine how father will roar and how my courage will ooze out of the heels of my boots."

"Just let me catch the deacon roaring at my wife!" exclaimed Mark, with a swelling chest. "Now, run along home, Patty, dear, for I don't want you scolded on my account. I'll sound Ellen and see if she's brave enough to be one of the eloping party. Good night! Good night!"

CHAPTER XXII. A Wedding Ring.

THE snow had come. It had begun to fall softly and steadily at the beginning of the week, and now for days it had covered the ground deeper and deeper, drifting about the little red brick house on the hilltop, banking up against the barn and shrouding the sheds and the smaller buildings.

There had been two cold, still nights; the windows were covered with silvery landscapes whose delicate foliage made every pane of glass a leafy bower, while a dazzling crust bediamonded the hillsides, so that no eye could rest on them long without becoming snow blinded.

Town House hill was not as well traveled as many others, and Deacon Baxter had often to break his own road down to the store without waiting for the help of the village snow plow to make things easier for him.

Many a path had Waitstill broken in her time, and it was by no means one of her most distasteful tasks—that of shoveling into the drifts of heaped up whiteness, tossing them to one side or the other and cutting a narrow, clean edged track that would pack down into the hardness of marble.

There were many "chores" to be done these cold mornings before any household could draw a breath of comfort. The Baxters kept but one cow in winter, killed the pig—not to eat, but to sell—and reduced the flock of hens and turkeys, but Waitstill was always as busy in the barn as in her own proper domain.

Her heart yearned for all the dumb creatures about the place, intervening between them and her father's scanty care, and when the thermometer descended far below zero she would be found stuffing hay into the holes and cracks of the barn and henhouse, giving the horse and cow fresh beddings of straw and a mouthful of extra food between the slender meals provided by the deacon.

It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and a fire in the Baxters' kitchen since 6 in the morning had produced a fairly temperate climate in that one room, though the entries and chambers might have been used for refrigerators, as the deacon was as parsimonious in the use of fuel as in all other things, and if his daughters had not been hardy young creatures, trained from their very birth to discomforts and exposures of every sort, they would have died long ago.

The Baxter kitchen shone and glittered in all its accustomed cleanliness and order. Scrubbing and polishing were cheap amusements and nobody grudged them to Waitstill. No tables in Riverboro were whiter, no tops more lustrous, no pewter brighter, no brick hearths redder than hers. The beams and brown bread and Indian pudding were basking in the warmth of the old brick oven, and what with the crackle and sparkle of the fire, the gleam of the blue willow ware on the cupboard shelves, and the scarlet geraniums blooming on the sunny shelf above the sink, there were few pleasant places to be found in the village than that same Baxter kitchen.

(To be continued.)

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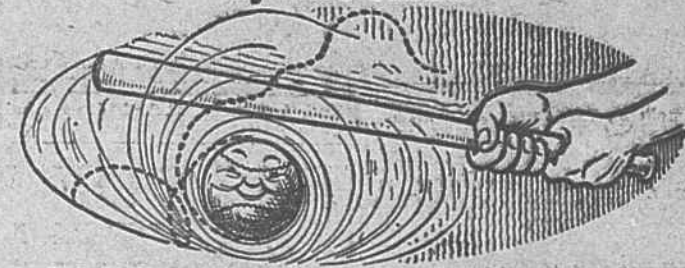
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In treating any blood disorder the fundamental fact must be observed that the aim and object of the medicine used is to permit a hit, a home run and a sure, safe hit every time. Now the propulsive effect of S. S. S. is to regulate the blood formation, to assist in development of tissue and to have a decided bearing upon the lymphatic influence, all of which is in the promotion of blood health. And this propulsive effect will be similar to the straight ball pitched to insure a rare hit and not the deceptive gyrations designed to fool the batter. S. S. S. is a plain, straight blood purifier. It is not a fanciful mixture to move the bowels and thus falsely play upon susceptible minds. It is not a nerve excitant to exhilarate for the moment and then die away. It contains none of those mineral drugs which dry up the tissues. In other words, it does not play to the bleachers nor to the "fans." It is just a wholesome, powerful, searching blood remedy, the ingredient of which serves the active purpose of arousing each cellular part of the tissues to select from the blood the nutriment or materials required for renewal of health. S. S. S. is prepared from nature's own materials, not an ounce of drugs being used. And yet it is more potent, more powerful, more searching and more productive of restorative results than from the most active of all the minerals employed in medicine. In action by elimination of the irritating poisons that infect the blood, is one of the very important things to know. You can get S. S. S. at any drug store, but take no other so-called blood purifier falsely claimed "just as good." S. S. S. is prepared by The Swift Specific Co., 600 Swift Bldg., Atlanta, Ga., and if you have any deep-seated or obstinate blood trouble, write to their Medical Dept. for free advice. It will be worth your while to do so.

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